

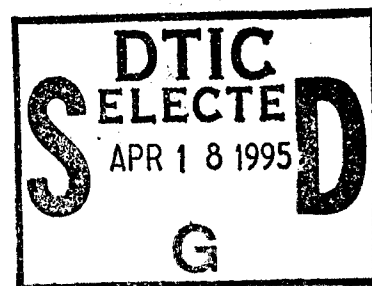
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OPERATIONAL DECEPTION:  
A Timeless Tool of the Operational Commander

by

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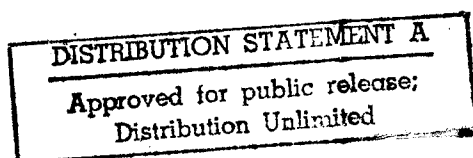
A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: 

13 February 1995

Submitted  
to  
CAPT David J. Grieve, USN  
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## Abstract of

### OPERATIONAL DECEPTION: A Timeless Tool of the Operational Commander

This paper examines operational deception (OPDEC) as a timeless ingredient for victory. The paper explains what OPDEC is and covers the six basic principles for successful deception operations as outlined by JCS Publication 3-58. Using those six principles as a framework, it compares two highly successful deception case studies; Operation Fortitude South (1944) and the Six Day War (1967). The paper illustrates that, though the scenarios of the two deception operations were very different, the principles for success were the same. It then addresses some key OPDEC challenges and their relevance for today's operational commanders.

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## INTRODUCTION

"The whole history of war confirms that the aggressor always tries to gain the element of surprise as an important condition of securing victory with the smallest expenditure of forces, resources, and time."

General V. Lobov, Soviet Army<sup>1</sup>

Deception, as defined by Dr. Michael Handel, is "the process of influencing the enemy to make decisions disadvantageous to himself by supplying or denying him information."<sup>2</sup> Operational deception (OPDEC) and surprise are intimately related in military operations. Surprise, more than any other element of the theory of war, allows the quick attainment of a decisive result in the initial stages of war. Its great influence on the outcome of armed conflict, past and present, is sure testimony to its value as a force multiplier and as a resolute means for attaining wars political objective. Michael Handel adds, "If surprise is a decisive consideration in warfare, it is by deception that this condition is largely realized."<sup>3</sup>

A study by Colonel David M. Glantz, of Soviet and German World War II records concluded that maskirovka - cover, concealment and deception measures, was a major contributor to Soviet combat success.<sup>4</sup> One example of the magnitude of such operations was the Vistula-Oder campaign, when Soviet deception

was able to conceal the presence of almost a million troops and over two thousand tanks - almost forty percent of the total dedicated offensive force.<sup>5</sup> Again, against Japan in Manchuria, the Japanese were confronted with a force thirty percent larger than anticipated.<sup>6</sup> Barton Whaley, in another study, examined nearly two hundred historical cases of deception occurring between 1914 and 1968. In sixty-eight cases of strategic deception, surprise was achieved in eighty-seven percent of them. Out of forty-seven cases of operational and tactical deception studied, surprise led to victory in ninety-two percent.<sup>7</sup> Studies such as these, have compelled Western defense officials to reassess the role of deception as a critical factor in both friendly and enemy operations.

OPDEC has proven to be of immense value to campaign commanders in helping to achieve surprise, a fundamental and timeless principle of war. Together they can boost enemy casualties while limiting friendly casualties, it is relatively cost effective, and raises the odds of combat success. It can provide a means other than direct combat by which victory can be gained. OPDEC's relevance and value as a commander's tool has not diminished, but rather may have increased. This paper will look at what OPDEC is and examine its basic guiding principles. With this foundation we can analyze two case studies and compare and contrast them in the context of the six basic OPDEC principles. Finally, we will look at today's applications of OPDEC and possible future considerations.

## OPDEC

As stated in Army Field Manual 90-2, "...deception is misleading the enemy to cause him to do something that will assist the deceiver in achieving his objective. Political deception is achieved through diplomatic or international relations; military deception through the acts of military forces."<sup>8</sup>

The specific concept of OPDEC is better addressed in JCS Publication 3-58, Doctrine for Joint Operational Deception. These operations deal with military commanders of combatant commands and joint task forces in support of overall campaign objectives. JCS Pub. 3-58 describes six basic principles of OPDEC:<sup>9</sup>

1. **FOCUS:** OPDEC should be aimed at the enemy decisionmaker who has the capability of effecting the desired action(s). Intelligence is not the target, but rather the primary conduit used to get information to the decisionmaker.

2. **OBJECTIVES:** OPDEC objectives support the commander's objectives. Actions of the enemy commander are shaped by the OPDEC commander. In order for the adversary to react as desired, he must find the OPDEC story credible and verifiable.

3. **CENTRALIZED CONTROL:** OPDEC must be directed and controlled by a single element. This must be done to ensure the unity of effort of friendly forces. It is important that the deception is compatible with other operational plans so

contradictory actions do not raise doubt and compromise credibility. Execution may be decentralized as long as a single plan is adhered to.

4. **SECURITY:** The adversary must be denied all knowledge of a force's intent to deceive and the execution of that intent. Successful deception operations require strict security. In addition to an active operational security (OPSEC) effort, to deny information of both actual and deception activities, knowledge of deception plans and orders must be protected.

5. **TIMELINESS:** OPDEC requires close attention to timing. Adequate time must be allowed for its portrayal; for the adversary's intelligence to collect, analyze and report; for the adversary to react; and for friendly forces to detect the resulting reaction. The enemy's reaction to each phase should be anticipated, with the OPDEC plan having some degree of flexibility.

6. **INTEGRATION:** The OPDEC must support and be an integral part of operational planning. "Deception planning should occur simultaneously with operational planning."<sup>10</sup> To be most effective, OPDEC must be solidly integrated into the strategic and tactical levels to create a comprehensive, coherent deception plan.

These six basic principles provide a solid framework to start with. I feel that two of the principles warrant stressing again. Those are centralized control and integration. It is crucial that central control be maintained while, at the same



time, integrating the OPDEC through all levels of the overall plan. The more complete the integration is, the more believable to deception will be to the adversary. With centralized control, the danger of the plan being compromised by inconsistent actions is reduced. With this basic background, we will examine the two case studies.

### CASE STUDIES

"All warfare is based on deception. Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity. When near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away that you are near. Offer the enemy a bait to lure him; feign disorder and strike him."

Sun Tzu, The Art of War<sup>11</sup>

### **OPERATION FORTITUDE (1944)**

The first of my OPDEC case studies is Operation Fortitude, which was conducted in conjunction with the Normandy invasion plan, Operation Overlord in 1944. Operation Fortitude South was the subordinate deception plan that feigned an invasion in the Pas-de-Calais region and was just one part of a much larger Plan Bodyguard. Bodyguard was a comprehensive program coordinating all British, American and Soviet deception operations.<sup>12</sup> A key

point, in keeping with the basic principles of OPDEC, is the overall central control.

The objective of Fortitude South was to keep the German reserve - 15th Army Group at Pas-de-Calais, away from Normandy for at least one week.<sup>13</sup> This required a double bluff deception in which a real attack was made to appear as a diversion and a diversionary attack to appear real. The target was the German High Command (OKW) with Hitler playing a prominent role.

At that point during the war, the Germans were expecting an Allied invasion of France. The questions foremost on the OKW's mind were when, where and in what strength will the enemy attack? The Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) knew the situation and began to build the story for the Germans.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the factors which made the deception possible were the British cryptological effort, Ultra, gaining access to some of the highest communications of the German Reich, and the Double Cross Committee (XX), a network of double agents used by the British intelligence, which were considered very reliable by the OKW. Adding to the believability of the story was the fact that Pas-de-Calais was the closest spot to England and was the most direct route to the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany.

The Allies needed to make the Germans believe that they had sufficient force to conduct an attack on Normandy and to conduct a main thrust at Pas-de-Calais. This was accomplished through a plan of six main elements collectively titled Quicksilver.

The elements were as follows:<sup>15</sup>

**QUICKSILVER I** was the deception story of the Pas-de-Calais main invasion. It was supported by a dummy order of battle passed to the Germans through the XX network and dummy encampments being constructed for German reconnaissance.

**QUICKSILVER II** consisted of wireless transmissions from the imaginary First US Army Group (FUSAG). To add to its credibility, the command was appointed real and prominent officers, such as Lieutenant General George S. Patton.

**QUICKSILVER III** was the placement of dummy landing craft set up in the Thames estuary, to be photographed by German reconnaissance aircraft.

**QUICKSILVER IV** was an intensive bombing campaign of the Pas-de-Calais area and its communications, to soften the supposed invasion site.

**QUICKSILVER V** was an increase in radio nodes just prior to the invasion to feign increased activity in the area.

**QUICKSILVER VI** was a decoy lighting scheme to the east of the actual Normandy invasion forces to draw away possible bombing attempts from the true mounting point.

To ensure the security of the operations, all troops were sealed in marshaling areas guarded by two thousand counter intelligence corpsmen.<sup>16</sup> The effectiveness of the deception was verified by Ultra and the XX network. Of over two hundred and fifty relevant agent reports received by German intelligence prior to D-Day, only one had the correct time and place of the

invasion. It had been planted by Allied intelligence on a discredited former Abwehr collaborator.<sup>17</sup>

The result of Fortitude was an overall success. The objective was to freeze the German reserves for one week, when in actuality, it froze the majority of units at Pas-de-Calais until the Bodyguard plan was finally discovered in early August, two months later. By that time, the Allies had gained the foothold they needed to successfully drive the war in Europe to a close.

#### THE SIX DAY WAR (1967)

My next case study deals with a very different scenario, but again, the basic principles of OPDEC are used with great success.

For the Six Day War, the Israelis employed a series of deception operations, allowing them to overcome a much larger Egyptian force. Because Israel did not have the resources to conduct a large campaign for more than a few days, the decision was made to conduct a pre-emptive strike against Egypt. It envisioned a surprise all-out strike against the Egyptian forces, while holding the line on the Syrian and Jordanian fronts. The attack had three objectives. First, was to open the Straits of Tiran by destroying Egyptian forces in the Sinai. The second, was to capture the west bank of the Jordan River, eliminating a constant trouble spot, and finally, to capture the Golan Heights, eliminating the artillery located there.<sup>18</sup>

Like Fortitude, the deception plan was incorporated from the beginning in the overall plan, maintaining strong centralized control. It was integrated through all three levels, strategic, operational and tactical.

At the strategic level, Moshe Dayan, the newly appointed defense minister, in his June 3rd appearance, stated of the Egyptian buildup in the Sinai, "The Government - before I became a member of it - embarked on diplomacy; we must give it a chance."<sup>19</sup> He also stated that, if war eventually ensued, Israel would not make the first strike. To add to the believability, the Israeli army was allowed to go on leave the last few days before the war. Pictures taken by the foreign press, showed Israeli troops lounging on the beach, giving the impression that nothing out of the ordinary was brewing.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, a massive deception was underway. Troops were alerted about the call-up through a series of coded messages over Radio Israel. Propellered aircraft flew in place of jets, emitting normal jet communication signatures to cover the stand-down of the entire Israeli jet force to ready them for combat. The OPDEC involved the joint forces of Israeli land, sea and air in a thoroughly prepared plan. Each phase was designed to make the enemy do something to assist the deceiver in achieving his objective.

The Israelis wanted to weaken the Egyptian Naval forces in the Mediterranean as much as possible to minimize the threat of naval gunfire to the coastal cities, especially Tel Aviv. They

staged a fake build-up of landing craft to the south at Eilat. They coupled this with numerous motor torpedo boat patrols south to the Gulf of Aqaba. The result of these actions drew thirty percent of the Egyptian Navy south to the Red Sea where they were of little threat to Israel.<sup>21</sup>

The ground forces were also successful in their deception plan. The main force of three Israeli divisions was carefully camouflaged opposite the northern portion of the Sinai. A smaller force to the south, heavily reinforced with dummy tanks, effectively deceived the Egyptian reconnaissance flights into believing they were the main ground force.

The air deception was, again, aimed at keeping the Egyptians looking south. Daily air-probes were run south prior to D-Day. This caused the Egyptians to move twenty frontline aircraft to the south, expecting Israeli actions to be focused there. Israeli electronic intelligence and air reconnaissance revealed definite daily patterns of operation for the Egyptians, helping to determine the best time of day to attack. On D-Day, the Israelis launched the attack observing complete radio silence on the in-run and flying contour to land and sea to avoid radar detection. The Egyptians were caught by complete surprise. In the first 170 minutes, the Israeli air attacks had destroyed 300 of the 340 serviceable enemy aircraft, achieving important air superiority in the theater.<sup>22</sup>

Again, through careful planning, coordination and execution, OPDEC was able to achieve complete surprise and

produce a stunning victory over a numerically superior enemy force. It is also important to note that it was successful even in the presence of modern sensors. The Egyptians ran daily air reconnaissance missions over Israel and were in possession of Soviet reconnaissance aircraft, radars, and air defense systems. The Israeli:Arab totals tell the rest of the story: killed in action 730:23,000, lost tanks 61:780, lost aircraft 26:452 (393 on the ground).<sup>23</sup>

### ANALYSIS

These two case studies are very different in regards to time period, sizes of forces involved, technology available, etc. However, the basic principles of OPDEC remain constant and common to both situations.

First, both OPDEC plans were focused correctly to effect troop movement or lack of movement of the enemy. The Allies and Israelis both used every means available to build their respective stories and maintain their credibility. They were careful to evaluate all avenues which were open to the enemy to collect intelligence and then were able to tailor the stream of appropriate information to the adversary to effect the deception.

Next, were the objectives. The actions of the enemy commanders were shaped by the OPDEC commanders. In Fortitude, the enemy commanders kept their troops frozen, not really sure

about where the main thrust of the Allied invasion was coming. On the other hand, the Egyptians were actually persuaded to move ships and aircraft in response to Israeli deception. Both situations put forth credible stories backed at all levels with supporting information. Fortitude had geographical believability on their side, with Pas-de-Calais being the closest point to England. Forces were distributed and portrayed to make a double invasion seem possible for the Allies. Bombing efforts were directed consistent with the possible invasion site. Real officers as commanders, fabricated radio signals and false information passed through the XX network, all corroborated the story.

The Israelis had public statements, pictures in the press, troop movements and flight patterns all consistent with a business as usual mode. Egyptians thought they knew the threat and would be able to counter it in the event of war.

Third, both plans were incorporated in the initial overall planning of the operation. **Centralized control** and coordination was a key factor throughout. Each had to incorporate air, land and sea factions, with Fortitude encompassing a multi-national force in their overall scheme. Decentralized actions came into play, yet, in accordance with principle, a central plan was adhered to.

With respect to **security**, Fortitude was supported with high security efforts. As mentioned, all invasion troops were kept in guarded marshaling areas. Plans were kept at a need-to-know



level. The Israelis, as well, kept security at a very high level, using coded messages, limited transmissions, word of mouth on a need-to-know level, etc. Though the size and scope of the cases were quite different the principle was constant. The Allies and Israelis both had well developed intelligence and counter-intelligence networks to ensure the security of all operations.

Adequate time was provided, in both cases, to allow for the deception stories to unfold. They both needed to create patterns to be realized by the enemy. The Allies were creating an imaginary main invasion force for Pas-de-Calais with all the associated actions, while the Israelis were trying to portray a major force and intent in the southern Sinai. In each case, adequate time was taken to build a story, have the story received, analyzed and then reacted to, with the reaction being realized, in turn, by the OPDEC commanders. This brings us to the sixth and final principle, integration.

Both OPDEC plans were integral parts of the main operational schemes from the initial planning phase. Each extended to the strategic and tactical levels, enhancing and completing the overall deception story. The Allies story went from the creation of a mythical command structure with high profile officers to dummy landing craft and troops. The Israelis, likewise, ran the gamut from public press statements on policy to dummy tanks in the desert.

## CONCLUSION

It is evident that though these cases are quite different, separated by twenty three years and a large technology gap, the same basic principles of OPDEC were applied with great success. Even today, in the age of satellite imagery, smart weapons, etc., OPDEC still has its place. Desert Storm, our most recent example, contained a very successful OPDEC plan. Based on CINCCENT directives to "Use operational deception to fix or divert Republican Guard and other heavy units away from the main effort."<sup>24</sup> Once more, this plan was successful and contributed greatly to the overall success of the Coalition Forces.

Today's operational commander must be thoroughly familiar with the basic principles of OPDEC and its use. Especially in this climate of shrinking budgets and downsizing of forces, OPDECs use as a force multiplier becomes even more important. In the words of Michael Handel, "Deception is the cheapest and most effective force multiplier."<sup>25</sup>

There are many new challenges affecting the ability to deceive as well as the chances of being deceived, due to the increase in technically sophisticated and highly intrusive surveillance systems. The products from many of these new overhead systems are readily available to those who are willing to pay the price for them. New real-time surveillance capabilities such as remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs), and high-tech manned reconnaissance aircraft equipped with visual, infra-

red and radar capabilities must be considered. Even the foot soldier with access to GPS receivers and night vision equipment must be thought of when considering OPDEC plans or defenses.<sup>26</sup> The media also must be factored in as a powerful force. They, too, may be a hinderance to operations, or, as in the Six Day War, a powerful enforcer for operational deception plans. Here, it is crucial that **centralized control** and coordination is used to anticipate contacts with the media and consistent information is conveyed. These can be a hinderance when devising and carrying out operational plans, but can also be used as targets to effect your own OPDEC plans.

Accurate intelligence can mean the difference between success and failure of OPDEC, whether the commander is the deceiver or the target of deception. A good working relationship between commander and intelligence officer can greatly enhance the success of a campaign. Haswell writes, "...only the intelligence officer, with his detailed knowledge acquired from a study of the enemy, is in a position to deceive the enemy and spot the enemy's deception."<sup>27</sup>

In conclusion, German General Waldemar wrote, prior to World War II, "In war the unexpected is most successful. Thus surprise is the key to victory."<sup>28</sup> Operational deception makes that surprise possible. OPDEC has been a proven ingredient for success in the past and continues to be an invaluable tool for today's operational commander.

## NOTES

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